DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 313 789 EA 021 464

AUTHOR Edwards, Floyd H.
TITLE An Experiential Based Preparation Program for Principals.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (Columbia, SC, November 11-14, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Adult Learning; *College School Cooperation; *Cooperative Learning; Elementary Secondary Education; *Experiential Learning; *Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; *Principals
IDENTIFIERS *Danforth Foundation; East Tennessee State University

ABSTRACT

The 1989 report of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration recommends that long-term relationships be established between universities and colleges to create partnership sites for clinical study, field residency, and applied research. The student intern's field residency depends heavily on field-based mentors, requiring a relationship that is intense, stimulating, and trusting. Developing high quality internships and field experiences requires planning, commitment, energy, and sensible logistical arrangements. The Danforth Program for the Preparation of School Principals at East Tennessee State University, initiated in 1980, incorporates all these desirable elements. In this program, the Danforth Foundation staff work with the faculty of four or five selected universities for 18 months to help faculty develop alternative principal preparation programs cooperatively with practicing school administrators. Emphasis is on experiential learning opportunities for prospective principals. University faculty and school administrators cooperate to ensure that candidates gain a working knowledge of school leadership standards and help them learn through multiple practice events in real school and community environments. Such a partnership takes advantage of both practical and academic knowledge. The various steps for developing the East Tennessee State University-Danforth Program are described at length, from steering committee formation through curriculum restructuring and program evaluation. (Five references) (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED313789

An Experiential Based Preparation Program For Principals

Floyd H. Edwards

Department of Educational Leadership
and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Floyd H. Edwards

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presented To
Southern Regional Council of Educational Administration
Columbia, South Carolina
November 13, 1989

EA 021 464

An Experiential Based Preparation Program for Principals

Introduction

The introductory paragraph of the report "School Leadership Preparation: A Preface for Action: published by the American Association of Colleges and Schools (AACTE) states that:

> Dramatic changes are needed in programs to prepare school administrators if they are to lead their schools and faculties rather than just manage them. As teachers become more professional and assume more responsible organizational roles outside their classrooms, the status and authority of school administrators will shift. Their authority will derive more directly from their expertise in the core functions of schooling than from their hierarchical positions in the school bureaucracy. This is a necessary shift if the movement toward professionalism is to progress. School administrators risk becoming an anachronism if their preparation programs in schools, colleges, and departments of education do not respond to calls for change in preparing them for professional leadership functions (AACTE 1988).

Anderson (1988) has expressed the opinion that:

> Although the pool of principal candidates is large--many individuals hold appropriate certification--there is reason to believe the number of "highly capable" applicants may be dwindling. Through interviews with school leaders across the country for The Executive Educator, Kathleen McCormick was able to document a growing concern about a pending shortage of "rising stars" for the principalship. Scott Thompson, executive director of the 42,000 member National Association of Secondary School Principals, told McCormick, "We don't have enough top-notch people to fill the jobs." Thompson added, "We have to do a better job of preparing people for administrative positions to improve the pool of capable candidates."

Rubin (1988) states that the notion of experiential learning seems to have gained popularity over the last twenty years. It

is indeed an unusual American College that does not sponsor departmental internships, offer a cooperative education program, or promote community-service learning. Whether students are spending ten hours a week as volunteer tutors for third graders with reading problems, or are working at full-time paid positions the issues that their diverse experiential learning raise for faculty are similar.

Experiential learning is often explained by reference to David Kolb's experiential learning cycle. The learner proceeds from the actual experience itself through a process of reflection about the experience, conceptualization or generalization that relates the experience to theories and to other experiences, and active experimentation with changed practice based on these considerations. Although Kolb's model is helpful in explaining what the learner is going through, it makes no assumptions about the role of the faculty member on campus, the supervisor at the work site, or the institution that sets policies about the academic validity of the learning (Rubin, 1983).

The Report of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) recommends that long term relationships be established between universities and school districts to create partnership sites for clinical study, field residency, and applied research. The report goes on to say that the quality of the preparation program for school administrators relies on the establishment and maintenance of long-term, formal, collegial relationships between university departments of educational

administration and school systems that exhibit excellence in administrative performance and educational outcomes.

The report further states that the student intern's period of field residency depends as heavily on field based mentors as university faculty. Daily observation, participation, and reflection during the residency period requires a relationship between the trainee and the mentor that is intense, intellectually stimulating and trusting. The field residency should revolve around supervised practice, assessment of the intern's strengths and weaknesses, and site based academic seminars. Developing high quality internships and experiences requires planning, commitment, energy, and sensible logistical arrangements. (National Policy Board, 1989) I believe that the Principal's Preparation Program at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), in cooperation with the Danforth Foundation, incorporates all of these desirable elements.

Danforth Program For The Preparation of School Principals

The Danforth Program for the Preparation of School Principals was initiated in October of 1986. As a result of diverse expectations and new demands that society is placing upon schools, principals face a new and challenging array of complex issues. Current state legislation, stringent accountability procedures, and the proliferation of regulations governing schools all require principals to possess knowledge of research and skill in leadership beyond that needed even a decade ago.

Recent research on practices of effective schools reinforces the need for strong school leadership by school principals. Faculty members in many universities believe that the opportunity exists to identify and carry out improved practices in the preparation of school administrators.

In this program, the Staff of the Danforth Foundation each year works with the faculty of four to five selected universities for eighteen months in an effort to support the faculty to think and act boldly in developing alternative programs for the preparation of principals in collaboration with practicing administrators in schools. Emphasis of the alternative program is on experiential learning opportunities for the prospective principals. The learnings include the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes about school leadership through observation, self-paced study, and numerous and varied consultations with university faculty, community leaders, researchers, and practicing administrators. The learning experiences in this program are directed by a faculty member in each university, assisted by practicing school administrators in local schools selected for their effective leadership and insight into the role of administration and their skill in working with teachers. The university faculty and practicing school administrators work together to assure that the candidates gain a working knowledge, understanding, and skills of the commonly held standards of school principals, and also assist the candidates to learn through multiple practice events in real school and

community environments. The candidates regularly test their ability to place theoretical and textbook learnings into practice and learn from the consequences. The experiences provided by the university professors and the superintendents, assistant superintendent, and directors are designed to prepare the candidates so that in their first position as a practicing school principal, they will have an understanding of the operation of a school and be able to exert a style of leadership in the school and community beyond that currently in vogue. Such a partnership between universities and schools takes advantage of the practical knowledge held by practicing principals and integrates experiences in a school with academic activities at the university and internships with community leaders.

The ETSU-Danforth Principal Preparation Program

On October 9, 1987, Dr. Don Gresso, Vice President of the Danforth Foundation visited the ETSU campus. He discussed the concept of the Danforth Preparation Program for Principals with the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership, Dean of the College, and invited superintendents from Northeast Tennessee. Perhaps the most enthusiastic approval of the concept came when Dr. Gresso emphasized the necessity for collaboration between colleges/schools of education and local education agencies in developing effective preparation programs for school principals. Here, at last, seemed to be the setting for the

wedding of theory and practice. At this meeting the school system representatives voted unanimously to endorse the concept and urged that ETSU be selected to implement the program.

ETSU did apply to the Danforth Foundation to be one of the institutions of higher education chosen to implement the third cycle of the Principal Preparation Program. Other institutions such as Georgia State, University of Alabama, and Ohio State had pioneered the first cycle, and the Universities of Indiana, Houston, Massachusetts, Oklahoma and Washington were cycle II institutions. An announcement was made by the Danforth Foundation about November 1 that the cycle 3 institutions were East Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Brigham Young, University of Virginia, San Diego State, and City College of New York.

After informing the superintendents of school systems in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia of our selection, we immediately initiated plans for publicizing the program and developing procedures and instruments to recruit and select candidates for internships. The experiences and materials developed by Cycle I and II institutions were of inestimable value to us in getting our program started.

Steering Committee

One of the early and very important activities was the selection of a Steering Committee. It was decided from the

outset, and upon the recommendation of Donn Gresso, that this committee would be a deliberative, decision-making body rather than just an advisory committee. We felt that is was important to have a broad spectrum of representation on this committee including those from both the public and private sectors. Nominations were solicited from school systems, civic clubs, business and industry, the professions, as well as the State Department of Education and university faculty. The Steering Committee, consisting of fourteen members included four principals, one superintendent, one supervisor of instruction, one director of personnel services, a teacher, a school board member, a dentist, the president of an oil company, the general manager for a city electrical system, a team leader from the SDE and a university professor. The Chairman of the Department of Educational Leadership and I serve as ex-officio members. All decisions, other than those of university policy, are brought to the Steering Committee's agenda. The group met monthly while the program was getting started, and now meets bi-monthly.

Preliminary Activities

Another early and important task was to secure from superintendents and their boards, a pledge for granting released time, with pay, for interns selected for the program. Another pledge sought from superintendents was that they would identify and recommend the assistance of able administrators to serve as

mentors.

A descriptive brochure was developed and distributed in volume to all LEA's, schools, and shopping malls. Both visual and printed media publicized the program and urged further inquiry about it. The deadline for nominations and applications was February 1, 1989. Nominations/Applications were routed through LEA's central office, where they were screened and then sent to the University.

Procedures in Selecting Interns

In cases where there were more than six nominations or applications the superintendent was asked to screen the group and submit recommendations that the LEA could support. More then sixty nominations/applications were submitted through LEA's to the University. Here a screening committee, consisting of professors and Steering Committee members further screened the group using such criteria as undergraduate and graduate grade point averages, written evaluations from principals, peers, and other professional educators, and performance on the Graduate Record Examination. From this screening a group of twenty-two candidates emerged. This group was brought to campus for a personal interview and an extemporaneous writing activity. The personal interview included elements of the NASSP Assessment Center concept materials. Each of the twenty-two finalists performed well on the selection criteria.

Some LEA's had more qualified candidates than could be provided with a paid leave of absence for the internship. Thirteen positions were committed by LEA's, so that number of potential interns was selected with others named as alternates. However, when the program actually began in May there were only nine interns. One of the systems which had committed two interns withdrew its commitment in early May due to "intense pressure brought on the board" by teachers within the system who held principal certification and accused the board of giving unfair advantage to Danforth interns. Another intern withdrew because of the death of his child and still another because her spouse took a new job.

Curriculum Development

The faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership worked long and hard to develop a new approach to the classroom instruction component of the Danforth program. The general approach to curriculum development was the use of instructional modules, flexible time schedules, experiential field activities, active research, and the use of adjunct faculty from other colleges and from the community at large. The course content was structured to emphasize knowledge and skills that were specifically needed in the principalship. A potentially valuable instructional relationship was developed with the Eastman Kodak Corporation in Kingsport, Tennessee. Eastman has an extensive

educational program of its own, with strong emphasis on the training of management and supervisory personnel.

The nine interns enrolled in an eighteen semester hour program of instruction over a thirteen week schedule in the summer of 1989. Instruction was totally in a cohort group with a special classroom used only by the Danforth interns. The first four days of each week were devoted to classroom instruction. The fifth day, each Friday, was used for a field experience for the cohort group. One Friday the group attended a statewide workshop for instructional supervisors; another Friday they participated in the Tennessee Administrators' Leadership Academy which is mandated for all principals in Tennessee; and on other Fridays they visited a very modern, computerized high school in North Carolina, and an exemplary outdoor learning center at the Baptist Children's Home in Salem, Virginia.

Evaluation of Summer Session

The schedule was rigorous and there were complaints the first week or two. However, the interns' assessment of the summer experience rated a strong 4.7 composite on a 5 point scale on an overall evaluation at summer's end. The interns were also asked to summarize their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Danforth program. A brief summary follows:

Strengths

1. Cohort group experience.
2. Variety and diversity of class presentations.
3. Field experiences.
4. Opportunities to interact with Administrators.
5. Learned the value of time management.
6. Interrelationship of course content.
7. Modeling administrative behaviors by professors.

Weaknesses

1. Heavy load of coursework.
2. Too little time for hands-on experiences.
3. Different levels of professional development of the interns.

Recommendations for Improving the Program

1. More field trips to school systems and industrial/management centers.
2. Provide one-half day each week to specifically discuss and share experiences and relieve frustrations.
3. More experience with computers.
4. Begin intern orientation prior to beginning of summer intercession.

This information was shared with the Steering Committee which devoted one session to studying and developing recommendations for the next cycle group.

One highlight of the summer instructional program was the cooperative effort between the two professors teaching supervision and research in guiding the cohort group in developing and implementing a statewide research project. The project dealt with the identification of barriers which confront Tennessee teachers as they attempt to carry out professional development. Another research project identified role behaviors of instructional supervisors in school systems in Northeast Tennessee. A report of the findings of these two research projects will be presented by Danforth interns at the annual meeting of Mid-South Educational Research Association meeting in Little Rock, November 8-10 and the National Council of States on Inservice Education in San Antonio, November 17-21.

Academic Year Activities

During the current Fall semester the interns are teaching in their respective schools and are enrolled in six semester hours of coursework: a course in Education Law specific to principals, and a practicum/mini-internship in their own school. A university coordinator monitors their practicum/mini-internship experience. Both the interns and their coordinator have expressed great satisfaction with their fall experience.

Thompson (1988) stated that "If an intern experience is to be fruitful, it should be conducted by a mentor with demonstrated leadership qualities."

The University began work last Spring to identify potential mentor principals who were strongly recommended by their superintendents. They must be willing to devote the time and energy necessary to be a mentor, and to receive university training in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to successful mentoring. We were able to train a cadre of nineteen mentor principals from eight school systems. We have had one informal social gathering of the interns and mentor principals. The interns have been given the list of mentor principals and a description and location of their schools. They have been asked to submit a list of three schools in the priority of their preference for beginning their internship. These requests will be screened by the Steering Committee and University Officials and a tentative placement made by November 15. Each intern will then have the opportunity to spend a day with their potential mentor principal to try to determine if the proper chemistry exists to work together. Confirmation of placement will be completed by December 1. On the first school day in 1990, the interns will begin a full semester of internship. They will be on leave, with full pay, from their school systems. Their internships will continue until at least one week after the last day students are present in their host school.

Whether or not each intern will remain the full semester in the same setting is yet to be determined. We believe that a significant period of time may be necessary to develop a truly

effective mentor-mentee relationship. It may be, however, that there is some value in placing some interns in more than one setting. A part of the training session for mentors was used to have them develop, in small group brainstorming sessions, a listing of experiences and activities they believed were necessary in a principal's training program. The principals also developed a list of the kinds of activities and experiences they believed would be available to interns in their respective schools.

The mentor principals will not be paid a stipend. They will be the guest of the University at selected athletic events, meals, a spring banquet, and perhaps some expense paid travel to some professional meetings.

We expect that six of the interns will graduate in May, 1990, with a Masters' Degree and certification as a principal. The other three will earn the Education Specialist degree and principal certification. We will continue to work with them in an effort to place them in principal positions for 1990-91.

Will the project be successful in producing a superior candidate for the principalship? We don't know, but we are cautiously optimistic. One thing we do know. This is an academically superior group that has specific goals and they believe they are going to accomplish them. Our professors have learned that working with a small, select, active and ambitious group is a challenge, but one they have gladly accepted.

We are now in the process of recruiting the second group of interns to begin the instructional component in May 1990.

Bibliography

Anderson, M. (1988) Hiring capable principals. Oregon School Study Council Bulletin, 31:9, 6.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989). Improving the preparation of school administrators: An agenda for reform. Charlottesville, VA.: Curry School of Education.

Rubin, S. (1988) Experiential teaching (Occasional Paper) Raleigh: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education.

Shibles, M. (1988) School leadership preparation: A preface for action. (p. 1) Subcommittee on the Preparation of School Administrators. Washington: American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education.

Thompson, J. A. (1988) The second wave of educational reform: Implications for school leadership, administration and organization, in Wendell, F. C. and Bryant, M. T. (Eds.) New directions for administrator preparation. (p. 17) Tempe, Az. University Council for Educational Administration.